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(1) Prefectural assembly elections: Minshuto makes giant leap in urban areas; LDP alarmed at Minshuto's increase of 145 seats with approach of Upper House election

YOMIURI (Top play) (Excerpts)
April 9, 2007

It has become clear that the largest opposition party Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan) expanded its base in both urban and rural areas through the 44 prefectural assembly and 15 ordinance-designated major city assembly elections that took place yesterday. This has prompted the ruling Liberal Democratic Party to become alarmed at the largest opposition party's growing strength. The skirmish between the LDP and Minshuto is likely to continue with an eye on the Upper House election this summer.

In the 44 prefectural assembly elections, the LDP won 1,212 seats, or a record low of 47.6% of the total. Minshuto, on the other hand, garnered 375 seats, or 14.7% of the total, showing a significant increase from the previous race's 230 seats (including those won by the now defunct Liberal Party).

LDP Secretary General Hidenao Nakagawa, speaking to reporters in Tokyo this morning, indicated that the races were not uphill battles, saying: "Our party narrowed down our candidates. We also backed some 200 independent candidates, and they all fought well. Minshuto has increased its seats, and that to some extent is ascribable to (municipal) mergers."

But some LDP lawmakers are wary of a possible negative impact on national politics by the declined LDP share at the local level. "Many LDP candidates were lost to Minshuto rivals in urban areas in such regions as Tokai and Kinki. Prefectural assemblymen are

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expected to serve as 'frontline troops' in the upcoming the Upper House election, so their defeats worry us," a senior LDP campaign officer said apprehensively this morning.

(2) Mainichi exit polls: Unaffiliated voters turn to incumbents

MAINICHI (Page 3) (Full)
April 9, 2007

The Mainichi Shimbun conducted exit polls asking for whom people actually voted for in Sunday's Hokkaido, Iwate, Tokyo, Kanagawa, and Hiroshima gubernatorial races and Sapporo and Hiroshima mayoral elections. The ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)-backed candidates and candidates backed by the largest opposition party, Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan) locked horns in the five gubernatorial and two mayoral elections. Excluding the Iwate governorship race, which was fought by two new-face candidates, the four other gubernatorial elections were races between a new-face candidate and an incumbent. In the four exit polls, 40 to 61% of the unaffiliated voters voted for the incumbents. This meant that unaffiliated voters did not show their force in yesterday's elections.

Tokyo

Regarding the voting behavior by all age brackets, the percentages of the age brackets who voted for incumbent Gov. Shintaro Ishihara were higher than those of the age brackets who voted for the other candidates. Ishihara won support from the elderly: 58% of the voters aged at 70 and older and 55% of the voters in their sixties. In addition, 53% of the voters in their twenties voted for Ishihara. The highest percentage of the age bracket voted for former Miyagi Gov. Shiro Asano was 41% of those in their fifties, followed by 39% of the voters in their forties and by 26% of those in their twenties. Of those aged at 70 years old or older, only 27% voted for Asano. Fifty-one% of the male voters and 52% of the female voters voted for Ishihara, while 35% of the male voters and 31% of the female voters voted for Asano.

Hokkaido

The Hokkaido gubernatorial race was competed between the two candidates backed by the ruling and opposition camps. Of the unaffiliated voters, 53% voted for incumbent Gov. Harumi Takahashi, supported by the ruling LDP and its coalition partner New Komeito. Those who answered that they had voted for Satoshi Arai supported by Minshuto and the Social Democratic Party (SDP) was 32%. Eighty-seven% of the LDP supporters and 82% of the New Komeito supporters voted for Takahashi. Seventy-three% of Minshuto supporters and 58% of the SDP supporters voted for Arai. The SDP failed to reach a consensus in the party regarding the support for Arai. A majority of voters in all the age brackets voted for Takahashi. Sixty% of all female voters and 51% of all male voters voted for Takahashi.

Iwate

The Iwate gubernatorial race was fought among five new-face candidates. Eighty-eight% of Minshuto supporters voted for Takuya Tasso, a candidate backed by the main opposition party. Tasso also won 39% of the votes of the LDP supporters and 25% of the votes of the New Komeito supporters. Forty-eight% of the LDP supporters and 45% of the New Komeito supporters voted for Junichi Yanagimura. Of

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the unaffiliated voters, 47% voted for Tasso, while 21% voted for Yanagimura.

Kanagawa

In the Kanagawa gubernatorial election, 61% of the unaffiliated voters voted for incumbent Gov. Shigefumi Matsuzawa, crushing other candidates. Seventy-five% of Minshuto supporters, 65% of the LDP supporters, and 55% of the New Komeito supporters voted for Matsuzawa. Matsuzawa obtained support from a broad spectrum. Only 28% of the LDP supporters and 32% of the New Komeito supporters voted for Tadashi Sugino.

Fukuoka

In the Fukuoka gubernatorial race, 44% of the voters voted each for incumbent Gov. Wataru Aso and for new-face candidate Shuji Inatomi. Similar to the Tokyo governorship election, the Fukuoka race was competed between two major candidates. Seventy-four% of the supporters of Minshuto and 77% of the SDP supporters voted for Inatomi. Eighty-two% of the LDP supporters and 79% of the New Komeito supporters voted for Aso. Since the two candidates consolidated their support bases, Inatomi was defeated as he failed to obtain more unaffiliated votes than those secured by Aso.

(3) Danger of Japan-US alliance being shaken; US might lower level of information to Japan

SANKEI (Page 1) (Full)
April 6, 2007

There is a danger that the removal of critical data on the Aegis system by a Maritime Self-Defense Force seaman could severely rock the Japan-US alliance in a way never seen before. But that is not the only problem: Should information on state-of-the-art weaponry fall in the hands of an enemy, it could have a significant impact on the international military balance, as well.

The Maritime Staff Office on April 4 formed an investigative committee headed by Deputy Chief of Staff Tamotsu Kato and began a full-fledged investigation. A senior SDF officer expressed this concern: "We have yet to receive any inquiries from the United States. We are worried that the United States in future provisions of operational information to us might lower the (classification) level."

The Aegis system has a sweep capability covering a radius of several hundred kilometers. It is capable of detecting and tracking several hundred targets at once and attacking over 10 targets at the same time. In particular, high-performance radar SPY1 serves as an eye of an Aegis vessel and is often used in tracking ballistic missiles. It is the world's most advanced radar system, a vital component in the

missile defense (MD) system that Japan and the US will deploy. The United States has supplied Aegis technology only to Japan and Spain, as staunch US allies.

In intercepting a ballistic missile by using the MD system, Japan and the United States must share intelligence, such as missile launch information collected by early-warning satellites. The MSDF seaman leaked information on the Aegis system, a key component in the MD system. Satoshi Morimoto, Director of the Institute of International Studies at Takushoku University, took this view: "If a highly-advanced enemy country got hold of the leaked data, it might

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allow the country to jam the data-link between the SDF and US Navy vessels or use wiretapping as Japan-US interoperability. That might have a serious impact on the two countries' military potential."

Modern military technologies, including MD, carry great weight in the capability of cyberspace that includes the Internet and satellite communications. The Aegis system controls its radar and computer system that is highly capable of detecting, identifying, and analyzing missiles. For this reason, leaking information patterns in the system alone can cause significant damage, according to Morimoto.

The US government has repeatedly expressed concern about the fact that MSDF destroyers' identification call signs and other information was leaked out last year through the Winny file-sharing software and that the US military's information provided to the SDF on a Chinese submarine leaked out to the media.

Morimoto also pointed out: "Although it is possible to change software after information leaked out, Japan's low level of information control might take a toll on the Japan-US alliance in the future."

Meanwhile, military analyst Kazuhisa Ogawa, pointing out the fact that the wife of the petty officer 2nd class is Chinese and that an intelligence leak involving a Chinese woman had occurred in the past. Ogawa sounded alarmed: "There is a possibility that the SDF is being penetrated by foreign intelligence organizations. China is not the only one. Countries vying for hegemony with the United States are all eager to obtain information on the US Navy and the MSDF. Japan must do everything to protect its intelligence, using any means available."

(4) Ishiba tells of Aegis destroyer information leak on Fuji TV program aired on Apr. 8: Calls for exposure system matching IT society

SANKEI (Page 4) (Full)
April 9, 2007

Former Defense Agency Shigeru Ishiba told of the incident of Maritime Self-Defense Force petty officer 2nd class sneaking out key information on Aegis destroyers.

-- What are problems about the incident?

"The petty officer 2nd class is not in a position of obtaining such information, and yet, he managed to do so. It means that a person who ranks above him and is in such a position, leaked the information outside. The problem lies in this person's security awareness. (The Self-Defense Forces - SDF) have toughened penalties and crack downs to protect against intelligence leaks, but it is still not adequate."

-- Is there a possibility of the Chinese wife of the petty officer 2nd class being a spy?

"I do not know. It is strange that the case was exposed following a house search carried out after she had turned herself in for overstaying her visa. Other countries desire to obtain information on the Aegis system. Intelligence agencies carrying on activities are only natural. I am sure that the importance of the need to protect information among SDF members will be driven in by this

incident as a lesson and will lead to boosting national security."

-- What about measures for that?

"The GSDF security police are definitely short of hands. Their main duty is now to crack down on security protection that matches a highly sophisticated information and technology (IT) society. The Defense Ministry's and the SDF's intelligence awareness is weak. Penalties are also too light."

-- Do you think it is necessary to establish an anti-espionage law?

"Yes, I do. The SDF must let all personnel know what materials are classified as secret. Otherwise, it would be impossible to familiarize personnel with information that can be disclosed. It is important for the public and the media to understand that protecting information also protects our democracy."

(5) Activating PAC-3 emergency response system without public announcement might trigger national panic; Defense Ministry plans to flexibly transfer interceptors from Iruma to metropolitan areas

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 3) (Full)
April 7, 2007

The nation's missile defense (MD) system has become operational, with the deployment of PAC-3 anti-ballistic missile interceptors to the Air Self-Defense Force's Iruma base in Sayama City, Saitama Prefecture. The SDF can now intercept an incoming missile with the defense minister's order in accordance with the emergency response manual. However, even if the defense minister issued an activation order in accordance with the manual, the decision would not be made public. The possible transfer of PAC-3 interceptors from the Iruma base to a central part of Tokyo following the defense minister's unannounced order could trigger a national panic.

To deal with a fired ballistic missile, the government envisages two possible cases: (1) the missile is likely to hit Japan, and (2) the missile might not hit Japan. In the former, the defense minister will issue an order to destroy the incoming missile upon obtaining the prime minister's approval. In this instance, the order will be made public. In the latter, SDF troops will take action based on an order already issued by the defense minister in accordance with the emergency response manual. In this case, the Defense Ministry will not publicly announce the defense minister's order so as not to let the enemy know Japan's cards.

The PAC-3 system is capable of protecting an area with a radius of up to about 50 kilometers. This means the deployment of PAC-3 interceptors to such bases as Iruma, Narashino (Funabashi City, Chiba), Kasumigaura (Tsuchiura, Ibaraki), and Takeyama (Yokosuka, Kanagawa) is insufficient to defend Tokyo from ballistic missiles. Given the situation, the Defense Ministry has revealed a plan to flexibly transfer PAC-3 missile interceptors to state-owned or publicly owned land in Tokyo.

This specifically means that the SDF, based on intelligence on a possible ballistic missile launch, might relocate PAC-3 anti-ballistic missile interceptors from the Iruma base to the Defense Ministry in Shinjuku Ward or Camp Asaka in Nerima Ward as part of its emergency response system.

The transport of the PAC-3 system composed of at least five large

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vehicles is certain to draw public attention. The Defense Ministry, however, does not intend to make public such a step. "People won't be able to tell the difference with regular training," a happy-go-lucky Defense Ministry official commented. Another senior member pointed out the need to offer an explanation of some sort. This indicates that the government has "jumped the gun" and introduced the system before working out specifics.

The ASDF has six air defense missile groups. Of them, three groups are equipped with PAC-3 interceptors: the 1st Air Defense Missile Group in Iruma, the 4th Air Defense Missile Group in Gifu, and the 2nd Air Defense Missile Group in Kasuga, Fukuoka. How would the people in Hokkaido, Tohoku, Chugoku, and Shikoku - regions not covered by the PAC-3 umbrella - view the transfer of anti-ballistic missile interceptors to such cities as Tokyo, Nagoya, and Fukuoka in time of a national contingency?

A senior SDF official took this view: "Introducing the MD system costs 1 trillion yen in total. The government cannot afford to introduce PAC-3 missile interceptors to the all six ASDF air defense missile groups in the country."

Another officer explained the situation this way: "To begin with, the MD system is a political tool. Possessing the capability to intercept ballistic missiles gives Japan a strong voice against North Korea. Having the system carries great significance."

Now that the PAC-3 interceptors are in place, the Defense Ministry and the SDF have no other option but to follow the emergency response guidelines.

The Defense Ministry has yet to clarify exactly when the emergency response system should be activated. The ministry is likely to activate the system when (1) a ballistic missile has been mounted on a launcher, or (2) intelligence on a launch has increased. North Korea has made those moves often aimed at sending out political messages besides military training. Will the SDF transfer PAC-3 interceptors every time the North makes such a move? "Considering its impact on the public, the ministry won't be able to activate the emergency response system so easily," a senior SDF official predicted.

(6) Commentary: Accountability needed to extend SDF Iraq mission

YOMIURI (Page 15) (Full)
April 5, 2007

Hidemichi Katsumata, senior writer

A government bill to revise the Iraq Special Measures Law for a two-year extension of the Self-Defense Forces' deployment in Iraq is now before the Diet. For what reason was the SDF's Iraq deployment extended? The government ought to account for it.

Command headquarters for the Multinational Coalition Forces Iraq (MCFI) is located near the Persian Gulf. The command, which is called the "Combined Air Operations Center (CAOC)," is where the Air Self-Defense Force assigns 10 echelon officers to coordinate every morning with US and other MCFI member forces. However, US forces and Iraqi security forces began full-scale operations early this year to mop up insurgents and militants in Baghdad and in its environs. One ASDF staff officer confessed, "I feel as if we were walking on thin ice these days."

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The biggest reason is that the ASDF has no other choice but to depend on the US military's intelligence for everything about the security of its personnel.

Five US military choppers were shot down by insurgents in only two months after the mop-up operations began. The altitude of ASDF C-130 transport planes differs from that of helicopters. The C-130, however, has to pass within the range of antitank rockets in their landing approach. The C-130, when its missile sensor is activated, has to nose down while banking. Such a random steep approach has now become routine with the ASDF C-130s.

"We can't tell if we're actually being targeted by a missile," says one ASDF echelon officer. "But," this ASDF officer added, "the sensor never reacted when we were on a flight mission to and from the southern Iraqi city of Taril to back up the GSDF until last summer." In a coordination meeting held every morning at CAOC, a US

military officer briefs liaison officers from MCFI member forces on where to carry out mop-up operations. In addition, the US military also gives information there about possible danger. Based on information given there, the ASDF changes C-130 flight routes. There are also many cases where the ASDF suspends flights, according to the ASDF officer. "We have no choice but to keep in close touch with the US military for any information about safety," the ASDF officer said.

The Diet will soon debate the bill revising the Iraq Special Measures Law. However, some lawmakers in the ruling and opposition parties are reluctant or even opposed to amending the law. They are distrustful of the government for failing to fulfill its accountability to the public on what the ASDF has actually been doing in Iraq.

The government has so far taken the position that the primary purpose of sending SDF troops to Iraq is to engage in "humanitarian and reconstruction assistance activities for the Iraqi people." When it comes to ASDF activities, the government has explained that the ASDF will "airlift supplies and the like for humanitarian assistance." Last summer, however, the GSDF withdrew from the southern Iraqi city of Samawah. The ASDF then shifted to another purpose of the law in terms of "security backup in rear support for the US-led multinational forces." The ASDF's airlift mission in Iraq has also changed in substance.

The ASDF rarely airlifts supplies like foodstuffs and medicines. Instead, its C-130 transports carry MCFI personnel, including US troops, and civilians from United Nations organizations. The ASDF's C-130s make four flights a week to Iraq, and their flights are now extended to Taril, Baghdad, and the northern Iraqi city of Arbil.

Then, the question is why such facts about the ASDF's activities in Iraq have not been made public in Japan.

"Some people may say the ASDF is there to back up US forces," a senior Defense Ministry official said. "If the government is straightforward like this," the official added, "the government will be severely called into question over its decision to support the Iraq war, and the 'noncombat area' arguments could be reignited." In December last year, Defense Minister Kyuma remarked that US President Bush's decision over the Iraq war was wrong. Kyuma further hit the United States over the pending issue of relocating the US Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station in Okinawa, saying: "I have told

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them not to be so arrogant. Japan will do what's concerned with Japan, so leave it to Japan." These critical remarks on the United States can be taken as coming out of Kyuma's consideration for those opposed to extending the ASDF's Iraq mission, the Defense Ministry official explains.

If that is the case, SDF personnel working in Iraq must be finding it difficult for them to continue their work. It has been over three years since the government sent an advance team to Iraq in late 2003. The SDF replaced its Iraq-based ground troops in about four months' rotation. During that time, Japan has sent a total of about 2,300 SDF members. One of them was sent to Iraq four times.

Lt. Gen. Kunio Orita, who heads the ASDF Air Transport Command at its headquarters, commands the ASDF's Iraq mission. Orita says, "We need public understanding and support for our activities, and we also need justification for our activities." In his directives to his troops, Orita never fails to lay emphasis on the significance of Japan's alliance with the United States. That is because Orita deems it impossible for Japan to go it alone to secure its people in the event of an armed attack against Japan. North Korea is developing nuclear weapons and missiles. China is also building up its military power. Facing such threats, it is of no use to only say Japan should strengthen cooperation with the United States, Orita thinks to himself.

Four years ago, Japan supported the United States' attack in Iraq, which broke a number of United Nations resolutions without clarifying whether it had weapons of mass destruction. In Diet

deliberations, the government must make clear the vital importance of Japan's alliance with the United States. The government is called to account to the nation for the necessity and purpose of extending the SDF's Iraq mission in spite of its potential danger.

(7) JACL National President Larry Oda expresses concern over issue of comfort women may aggravate racial prejudice against Japanese Americans

SANKEI (Page 6) (Full)
April 8, 2007

In an interview with the Sankei Shimbun, Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) National President Larry Oda, 62, spoke of the United States House Resolution 121 denouncing Japan over the issue of so-called comfort women. He said there is a gap between the views of average Japanese-Americans and the position of Japanese-American Congressman Mike Honda (Democratic Party), who proposed the resolution. Oda also expressed his mixed feelings as a Japanese-American, remarking, "I am worried that the commotion over the issue could worsen racial prejudice against Japanese-Americans."

Upon stressing, "I am offering merely a personal view, because JACL is tasked with protecting the rights of Japanese-Americans is never involved in diplomatic issues," Oda said that on the issue of comfort women, "Japan has already offered its apologies. It is irrational for Japan to be pressed to take responsibility for (former comfort women's) refusal to accept its apologies."

Asked about Honda's intention, Oda said, "I don't know much about the details," but he added: "Since many Chinese people live in his electoral district, it might be natural to think that this circumstance is behind his motive." Oda said that Japanese-Americans

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had wondered why Honda had taken up the issue of comfort women out of the blue as a congressman representing a district in California.

Oda said: "Although we are very close, I have only met him as a JACL member." Oda described Honda as greatly interested in social justice-related issues from long before. He said that Honda earnestly addressed, in connection with the wartime internment of Japanese-Americans, the JACL-led movement to restore their rights.

Oda stressed the specific history of Japanese-Americans, remarking: "We, Japanese-Americans have mixed feelings whenever the issue of comfort women is taken up, because we were regarded as enemies (although we are Americans) and sent to relocation camps during WWII." He remarked that the racial prejudice has yet to completely disappear in American society, adding: "If Japanese people are regarded as the villains, racial discrimination or hatred against Japanese-Americans could grow stronger."

(8) Editorial: Comfort-women issue: Tenacious effort to clear up misunderstanding needed

SANKEI (Page 2) (Full)
April 9, 2007

The US House of Representatives will likely adopt in May a resolution seeking an apology from the Japanese government on the comfort-women issue. Japan should continue tenacious efforts to clear up the misunderstanding over this issue.

The resolution notes that the former Japanese Imperial Army forced young women to offer sexual services during World War II. We sincerely sympathize with those who served as comfort women. However, there is no evidence that the former Japanese Imperial Army directly and coercively hunted those women down like slaves, though they might have been involved in the form of conducting inspections of sexually transmitted diseases at comfort stations. This is the biggest factual error.

The Asia-Pacific Affairs subcommittee chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, during a press conference in Beijing,

indicated the likelihood of the resolution being passed. He then made this critical remark: "There seems to be a feeling among Japanese leaders to deny the existence (of comfort women)." This, too, is a misunderstanding. Japan has not denied the existence of comfort women.

The Japanese government so far has taken such measures as to dispatch a special advisor to the prime minister to the US and have its ambassador to the US send a letter to the subcommittee chairman. We believe that it is necessary to send an even stronger message.

Some US news organizations had adopted a tone of argument critical of the Japanese government as if it has "turned a blind eye to war crimes committed by Japan" (Washington Post), and treating the abductions of Japanese citizens by North Korea and the comfort-women issue on the same plane. North Korea has made a similar point. However, as Prime Minister Shinzo Abe rebutted, the abduction issue is an ongoing case of violation of human rights. The comfort-women issue is a totally different issue.

There is an increasing need to reconsider the 1993 statement of then Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono's on the comfort-women issue, which has provided grounds for the US House resolution. The Kono

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Statement recognized coercive recruitment of comfort women by the former Japanese Imperial Army and police as fact, stating there were cases in which constituted authorities were directly involved. However, there is no evidence proving such activities in official documents collected by the Japanese government. The only grounds for such a claim are accounts given by former comfort women from South Korea.

The Liberal Democratic Party's (LDP) "Committee of Diet members to consider the future of Japan and historical education" intends to reinvestigate the data that provided grounds for the Kono statement and work on US Congressmen not to support the resolution. Democratic Party members have launched a group to probe into the comfort-women issue and the truth about the Nanjing Incident on a voluntary basis.

We would like both the ruling and opposition camps to first thoroughly probe into the Kono statement, whose grounds are uncertain, by involving academic experts, and then suggest points to be revised to the government.

SCHIEFFER